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Punjabi School	Saturday 12.00 – 13.00 Sunday 11.00 – 13.00

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On behalf of the trustees, the team at the charity, the children and their families we would like to say a massive thank you to SeeQ and their associates for choosing to support Promise Dreams. With their continued support we will be able to help more children and their families make a special wish a reality.

If you would like more information on the charity please call 01902 378595 or visit www.promisedreams.co.uk

Once again thank you to SeeQ and its associates for choosing Promise Dreams. You really will be helping to make a difference.

Without the support of our sponsors and advertisers it would have been impossible to produce this magazine.

If you would like to support the magazine and place an advert in the next addition due out in Vaisakhi please contact us: info@see-q.net

DID YOU KNOW?

That case law in India has given human status to Guru Granth Sahib Ji - It's not a book.



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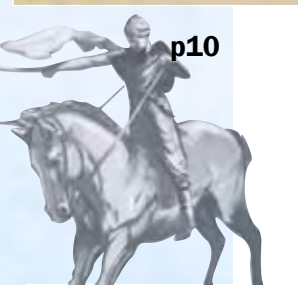
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Celebrating 300 Years with Guru Granth Sahib Ji

THE SEEQ TEAM

The team contains a variety of volunteers from various age groups and backgrounds. We are a non-profit organisation made up of individuals who regularly give up our time and money in order to promote community and religious spirit and help young people develop socially and personally. We are all committed to help making a positive difference to society as it stands today.

It is too common nowadays to see divisions within the younger members of our society based on religious beliefs, caste or simply where you live. Regardless of our up bringing, religious beliefs, or tastes, we all have one thing in common: Sikhism. We aim to try and ignite the light inside our youth today, to feel proud of what and who they actually are.

In attempting to promote our religious beliefs, one thing is certain: we'll make mistakes. We are open to suggestions and criticism, and promise to try our best in everything that we do. We apologise in advance for any offence that we may cause to any of our readers. SeeQ would like to take this opportunity to wish a happy 300 Years of Guru Ship under Guru Granth Sahib Ji to all Sikhs worldwide. May we stay strong in our beliefs and continue to serve mankind....

"Nanak Naam Chardi Kala, Teree Bhanee Sarbat Da Pala - May the name of Nanak always stay in high spirits, and may the good of mankind prevail."

We are always looking for people to help in any possible way, be it advertising, writing articles, or simple distributing copies of SeeQ. If anybody would like to contribute to further editions of SeeQ, please contact us on: info@See-Q.net

KEEPING THE FAITH

SUKHVINDER KAUR

"I needed to keep the faith and that's exactly what I did. The rest as they say is History"

Coming from what you might consider a typical 'desi' background, the only time that I would go to the gurdwara was for a religious function for family or friends. I wasn't much into going so didn't really know anything about my heritage. In fact the only thing I remember from the time I was small is my dad teaching me the Mool Mantar.

From my childhood to youth, older and onto college there were many turbulent times. Those were the days. College life was just one big party. My focus changed during those few years, no longer was education my forte. Now I knew everything about partying and all of its attributes, drinking, drug taking and bragging about my underachieving rebellious new self. My new self had gone to depths I never knew possible and wasn't conscious of at times, with tattoos to remind me of where I had been.

Something from my past snapped me back into a reality that I didn't want to face. My turbulent youth came back to haunt me and doctors confirmed that my cancer would never be cured. My first thoughts were God had abandoned me.

During the chemotherapy I lost all of my hair and most of my faith. Everything bad in my life was because of God and it seemed nothing would bring me happiness again.

Slowly, my health began to show signs of improvement and it seemed the cancer was going back under control. Finally I felt that I had a new lease of life, little did I know that this 'new' life was just the beginning for me. It all happened 'accidentally'. My Masi Ji literally dragged me to the gurdwara when she didn't want to go alone and rather reluctantly I sat and listened to the katha (story/lecture). It was here that I learned about the 'chote sahibzade' (Guru Gobind Singh Ji's youngest two sons) and the sacrifices they made at such a young age. It struck a chord with me at the time, but by the time I got home I didn't give their actions a second thought.

That night I woke suddenly at 3am (amrit vela) and for some reason was wide awake. I remembered the 'katha' that I had heard at the gurdwara and began to remember God. I wasn't sure what this meant and wanted some kind of connection so I began to recite the Mool Mantar. This began to happen regularly and I found myself wanting to know more. I began to listen to kirtan and katha both at the gurdwara and on line and noticed how peaceful I felt. So why was it that I was going through so much turmoil when life should have been at the height of happiness?

How would I find a middle ground between my faith and my life? Could I grow my hair, stop threading my eyebrows, stop drinking? What would I do about my love affair with KFC? My family weren't into religion and although they hadn't supported my wild lifestyle, they weren't favourable to a religious life either.

I felt that I was alone facing all these choices. I never realised that I wasn't alone and that these choices had found their way into my being.

After attending a Rensbhai (all night kirtan programme) everything fell into place. I was lost in kirtan during the programme and felt the love of Waheguru in my heart as each shabad (verse) pounded through me. I was so lost in prayer that I didn't realise there were no other women left in attendance.

"That night I woke suddenly at 3am (amrit vela) and for some reason was wide awake. I remembered the 'katha' that I had heard at the gurdwara and began to remember God. I wasn't sure what this meant and wanted some kind of connection so I began to recite the Mool Mantar."

Feeling a little out of sorts at this prospect (although I should have realised that Waheguru was with me)

I went to look for my shoes to go home. They were nowhere to be seen. Whilst I looked here and there, a gursikh approached me and began telling me about his calling and how Waheguru was in every part of his life without making big changes. As he spoke his words, my confusion and fears began to melt away and my journey towards amrit began. My heart was almost there, it was time to give my head.

The gursikh had told me how difficult times would be for me in the time leading up to my amrit sanchaar and the hurdle that was society, my parents and friends was the biggest test for me yet. There seemed to be nowhere that I could take my amrit and doubts began to flood me. Was my Waheguru abandoning me? Where did I go from here? I didn't have to wait long, Waheguru sent me a sign and I received a phone call to tell me where there was an Amrit Sanchaar coming up.

It comes at you in sly touches during unexpected moments - the self-doubt that plagues a lot of parents.

For me, it is almost always tied into whether I have been able to pass on the love of Sikhi to my son, now nineteen.

Listening to Asa-di-Vaar on a Sunday morning, when I am completely drenched in the pathos and poignancy of music mingled with the Guru's wisdom, I often wonder, "Will Anhad ever feel what I feel while listening to Gurbani? Will it ever bring him to tears? Does he truly grasp the meaning and the wisdom embedded in each precious verse?"

As I ask myself these questions, I shy away from the answer that dredges up a certainty in my mind.

I know that the languages of Gurbani are "foreign" to him. Even though I take solace in the fact that he routinely recites or listens to various baanies, I wonder if, one day, a certain verse will pierce his heart wide open, cultivate in him a feeling of empathy and transform the way he looks at the world.

Growing up in India, we absorbed not only English, but Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and/or even Sanskrit, as a "second" language. Those of us who moved around in different states also picked up a smattering of Bihari, Bengali, Marathi, Haryanvi, etc.

"I am filled with a sense of loss, as I realize that there are many young Sikhs for whom delving into a shabad and disappearing in it, losing the sense of time and space and experiencing an inner expansion, is unlikely simply because they are not close to the nuances and subtleties of the languages of our scripture."

Gurbani is replete not only with a multiplicity of languages of the Indian sub-continent, but also different dialects of its people. Our Gurus were, after all, communicating the revealed Word to the masses in the languages that they understood.

What does sikhi mean to you? Tell us your story:
info@see-q.net

Is it a surprise, then, that its beauty and power is hard to experience by those reared in English with Spanish or French as a second language and Punjabi as a distant third?



We can knock ourselves and think of everything we could have done differently to make our kids more proficient in Gurmukhi and Gurbani, or **we can offer a route that may at first appear questionable to some, but can eventually instill a desire to study Gurbani in depth.**

Two Sundays ago, I attended an English Service at the Gurdwara during the Sunday school that runs in the afternoons.

The service opened with two shabads, Tu mera Pita, Tu hain mera mata and Na koyee bairi naahi begana.

The shabads had been translated and they were spiritedly sung by the children of the Khalsa School.

During the talk that followed on "Why we do what we do at the gurdwara", the young attendees of the program were educated on the reason for the protocol and respect shown to Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

The programme concluded with a poignantly-rendered English version of the Ardaas.

As I looked at the young faces of the five- and seven-year-old girls who sat in the first row, I saw a zestful and whole-hearted involvement that is rare. For once, they knew what they were singing; for once, the words were comforting because they were familiar; for once, they could put their heart and soul into the shabad, because it touched them at a deep and personal level.

by Jessie Kaur

REACHING OUT

Taking children to local Gurdwara, where sermons are being led in English is a wonderful opportunity for our children to invite their friends and acquaint them with the universal message of our Gurus.

"You are my father, you are my mother, you are my friend, you are my brother" - the verse was easy to understand and embrace."

The programme is offered not as an alternative to learning Gurmukhi, but as a way to relate to the message in an immediate and effortless way; the underlying hope being that once the love for the Guru's message is ignited, so will the desire to delve deeper into it, in its original form.

Knowing my community, I am fully cognizant of the divergent voices that will rise in opposition - with good intentions, I'm sure - to such an effort.

Perhaps they are unaware of the inroads Christianity is making in the Punjab by bringing their message to the masses in Punjabi. In many instances, they have incorporated the style and stance of Kirtan as they praise Jesus Christ!

Taking children to local Gurdwara, where sermons are being led in English is a wonderful opportunity for our children to invite their friends and acquaint them with the universal message of our Gurus. **Something to be proud of, something to share, finally, in a language the mainstream understands!**

During the two Anglo Sikh Wars (1845-1849), the British had been sufficiently impressed by the fighting qualities of the Sikhs to raise battalion after battalion of Sikh forces. They enlisted men of the Khalsa Army into their own regiments and into newly formed Sikh regiments.

for queen & country

by M Singh



The British ensured that all Sikh men recruited would be obliged to wear their hair and beards unshorn. An 1851 secret despatch, ordered that "...all Sikhs entering the British Army should receive the Pahul [baptism] and observe strictly the code of Sikh conduct." The Khalsa Army that had previously been the most formidable enemy of the British now became the most fervent of loyalists.

Dramatic confirmation of this reconciliation was received when the Sikhs refused to join the Indian Mutiny in 1857. For four extremely tense months the British raised 18 new regiments in the Punjab, largely Sikh and Muslim. Punjab became, and remained the sword arm and breadbasket of British India.



When the Great War in Europe began to unfold, the drive began to enlist Indian troops to bolster the war effort. With the assistance of influential Sikh leaders Sikhs joined the British Army en-masse. In the depressing trenches of the German and Turkish fronts thousands of young Sikh volunteers fought and lay down their lives, defending land unknown to them, against an enemy that was no threat to them for an ally that occupied their own country. The world was to behold the largest voluntary army ever in action, with 174 000 men from India, Sikhs made up nearly 20% of the British Indian Army despite being only 2% of the population. Commentators noted that the contribution of the Sikh community was ten times that of any other community of India.

"No living glory can transcend that of their supreme sacrifice, may they rest in peace"

As Sikh men, who had fought with their British comrades to free occupied lands in Western Europe, returned to their homes, the realization that they too were still occupied caused the call for change in their own Government. General Dyer finally and irrecoverably severed the relationship in 1919 after the notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre on thousands of unarmed protestors in Amritsar. As the allied nations stepped ever closer to a second global conflict, this time with the Japanese and the Germans, Sikh soldiers once again stepped forward. When India joined the war a sharply divided debate ensued and Indians split along the role that they should play. There was widespread violence in many cities as the British quelled demonstrations. However states like the Punjab from where the concentration of recruits into the British Indian Army came – looked on curiously at the events in Delhi. Young Sikh men helped to swell the Indian Army from 189,000 at the start of the war to over 2.5 million at the end of the war.

Sikhs still made up a disproportionate quantity of the forces that India gave to the war effort. Sikh soldiers were deployed to most of the active fronts during the Second World War, but it was in Burma where the Sikh Regiment was largely employed and where Sikh soldiers famously made their mark.

By the eve of the Second World War, Sikhs had fought on the mountains of Afghanistan, the deserts of Mesopotamia and the trenches of Flanders. By 1944, Sikh soldiers were well entrenched in the sweltering swamps of the Burmese Jungles where they played a vital role in arresting the Japanese and forcing them to retreat, winning four VC's in the process.

DD YOU KNOW?

"British people are highly indebted and obliged to Sikhs for a long time. I know that within this century we needed their help twice and they did help us very well. As a result of their timely help, we are today able to live with honour, dignity, and independence. In the war, they fought and died for us, wearing the turbans"

Sir Winston Churchill

Finally, we that live on can never forget those comrades who in giving their lives gave so much that is good to the story of the Sikh Regiment. No living glory can transcend that of their supreme sacrifice, may they rest in peace.

"In the last two world wars 83,005 turban wearing Sikh soldiers were killed and 109,045 were wounded. They all died or were wounded for the freedom of Britain and the world and during shell fire, with no other protection but the turban, the symbol of their faith." General Sir Frank Messervy KCSI, KBE, CB, DSO

how about 21?

The Battle of Saragarhi is the incredible story of 21 Sikh men of the 36th Sikh Regiment who gave up their lives in devotion to their duty. This battle, like many others fought by the Sikhs, highlights the heroic action by a small detachment of Sikh soldiers against incredible odds. This battle took place on 12 September 1897 in the Tirah region of North-West Frontier Province. In keeping with the tradition of the Sikh Army, they fought to the death rather than surrender.

Details of the Battle of Saraghari are considered accurate, due to Gurmukh Singh signaling events to Colonel Haughton of the British army at Fort Lockhart as they occurred.

The Afghans later stated that they had lost about 180 soldiers and many more were wounded during the engagement against the 21 Sikh soldiers, but some 600 bodies are said to have been seen around the ruined post when the relief party finally arrived.

When the gallantry of Saragarhi was recounted to the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the recitation drew a standing ovation from all the members of parliament.

"The British, as well as the Indians, are proud of the 36th Sikh Regiments. It is no exaggeration to record that the armies which possess the valiant Sikhs cannot face defeat in war" - Parliament of the United Kingdom.

To commemorate the men the British built two Saragarhi Gurudwaras: one in Amritsar close to the main entrance of the Golden Temple, and another in Ferozepur Cantonment, which was the district that most of the men hailed from. The battle of Saragarhi has frequently been compared to the Battle of Thermopylae (made popular by the film 300), where a small Greek force faced a large Persian army of Xerxes in 480 BC.

The ratio of the defending to the attacking force at Saragarhi was 1:476 (21 vs. 10,000)

It is important to note that during the Battle of Saraghari the 21 Sikhs chose to stay and fight before the battle commenced, knowing the odds they faced, whereas at Thermopylae, the 300 Spartans stayed after their lines had been breached, to fight to their deaths.

"You are never disappointed when you are with the Sikhs. Those 21 soldiers all fought to the death. That bravery should be within all of us. Those soldiers were lauded in Britain and their pride went throughout the Indian Army. Inside every Sikh should be this pride and courage. The important thing is that you must not get too big-headed it is important to be humble in victory and to pay respect to the other side." - Field Marshal William Joseph Slim, 1st Viscount Slim.

The Battle at Saragarhi is one of eight stories of collective bravery published by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). It has been mentioned as one of the five most significant events of its kind in the world.

- > Around 9.00am, around 10,000 Afghans reach the signaling post at Saragarhi.
- > Sardar Gurmukh Singh signals to Col. Haughton, situated in Fort Lockhart, that they are under attack.
- > Colonel Haughton states he cannot send immediate help to Saragarhi.
- > The Afghans ask the Sikhs to surrender, but the soldiers decide to fight to the last to prevent the enemy reaching the forts.
- > Bhagwan Singh becomes the first Sikh casualty and Lal Singh is seriously wounded.
- > Soldiers Lal Singh and Jiwa Singh carry the dead body of Bhagwan Singh back to the inner layer of the post.
- > The enemy breach the outer wall.

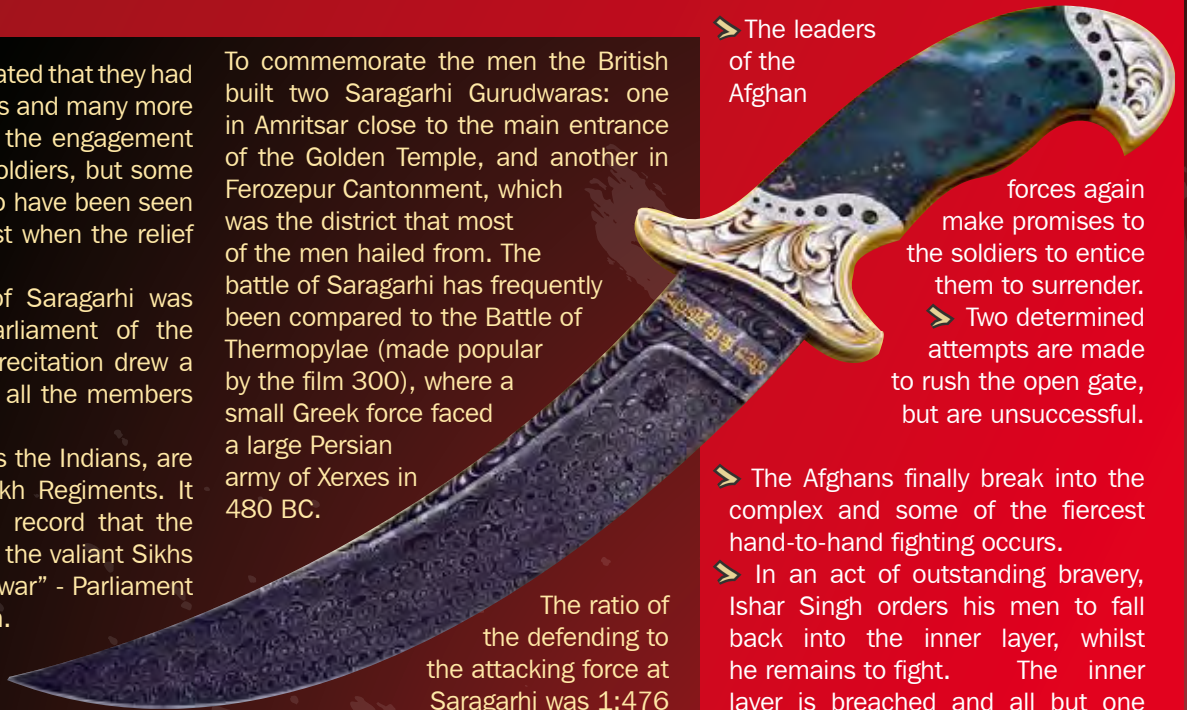
- > The leaders of the Afghan

forces again make promises to the soldiers to entice them to surrender.

- > Two determined attempts are made to rush the open gate, but are unsuccessful.

- > The Afghans finally break into the complex and some of the fiercest hand-to-hand fighting occurs.
- > In an act of outstanding bravery, Ishar Singh orders his men to fall back into the inner layer, whilst he remains to fight. The inner layer is breached and all but one of the defending soldiers are killed, along with many of the Pashtuns.
- > Gurmukh Singh sends his last signal to Col. Haughton saying all the men are dead and asks for permission to stop signaling as he would like to continue the fight.
- > Col. Haughton give his permission and sends his thanks to Gurmukh Singh.

- > Gurmukh Singh, who communicated the battle with Col. Haughton, was the last Sikh defender. He killed 20 Afghans as they tried to rush into the signaling room of the fort. The Pashtuns had to set fire to the post to kill him. As he was dying he yelled repeatedly the regimental battle-cry "Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal (He who cries God is Truth, is ever victorious).



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dos

- ✓ Cover your head at all times whilst in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- ✓ Five Sikhs must accompany Guru Granth Sahib Ji at all times
- ✓ Place suitable ramalee (clothing) upon the throne of Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- ✓ Remove your shoes when in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib Ji

don'ts

- ✗ Place Guru Granth Sahib Ji in suitcases, cupboards, on a shelf or any other disrespectful place. Guru Granth Sahib Ji must be placed on a Manji sahib
- ✗ Take Guru Granth Sahib Ji to a venue where alcohol, meat, tobacco are to be consumed, stored, or have already been consumed on the premises
- ✗ Take Guru Granth Sahib Ji to an unsuitably maintained environment. All locations must be cleaned, washed and suitably decorated.
- ✗ Eat/drink or make any small talk whilst in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- ✗ Point your feet towards Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- ✗ Go to the Gurdwara intoxicated or under the influence of any intoxicants or when meat products have been consumed
- ✗ Sit on a higher platform than Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Then

1604: Guru Arjan Dev Ji completes the Adi Granth (later compiled as the Guru Granth Sahib Ji), he appoints Baba Budha Ji as the head granthi and the first hukamnamma is taken. The day is soon complete, and Baba Budha Ji prepares the Adi Granth to be taken to its resting place (Sach Khand).

Once placed in its resting place, the sangat is in disbelief; Guru Arjan Dev Ji has made a statement so bold that Sikhism will never be the same. He himself takes up his resting place, but not where he normally takes it, he has given up his own bed to sleep on the floor out of respect for the Adi Granth.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji has shown the world the respect that the Shabad Guru deserves.

Now

2008: Today we have seen a turn for the worse. We are happy to carry out weddings in hotels and clubs, at the same time taking Guru Granth Sahib Ji to an establishment where alcohol, meat and tobacco are served, and in some instances even throw a party in its presence.

Today we have also taken upon the concept of carrying Guru Granth Sahib Ji in suitcases, in the boot of our car, and placing it to rest on a shelf or even a cupboard. This is the very same Guru we are asking to bless our lives, yet we treat Guru Granth Sahib Ji with total disrespect.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's honour is in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. We have to ask the question: Would we ask Guru Nanak Dev Ji to go to a club? In the Sikh religion, meat, tobacco and other drugs are considered sinful, yet we consume them in the presence of our Guru.

respect

1914: During World War I, Guru Granth Sahib Ji played a central role in the life of Sikh soldiers in the British Army. A new Sikh recruit would only be recruited into the army after being initiated into the Khalsa (taking Amrit) and taking an oath on Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Even in daily life, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, while being carried at the front of the regiment, would lead Sikhs into battle. Carrying the Guru Granth Sahib Ji at the front of the regiment was a tradition maintained by Sikhs from Maharaja Ranjit Singh up until the World Wars. All battles would only commence with the blessings of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, and any disrespect of Guru Granth Sahib Ji would not be tolerated; even in the middle of a battlefield. Major A.G Barstow, of the British army in 1928, tells us that: "even the British Officers of Indian Regiments saluted the 'Granth Sahib'.

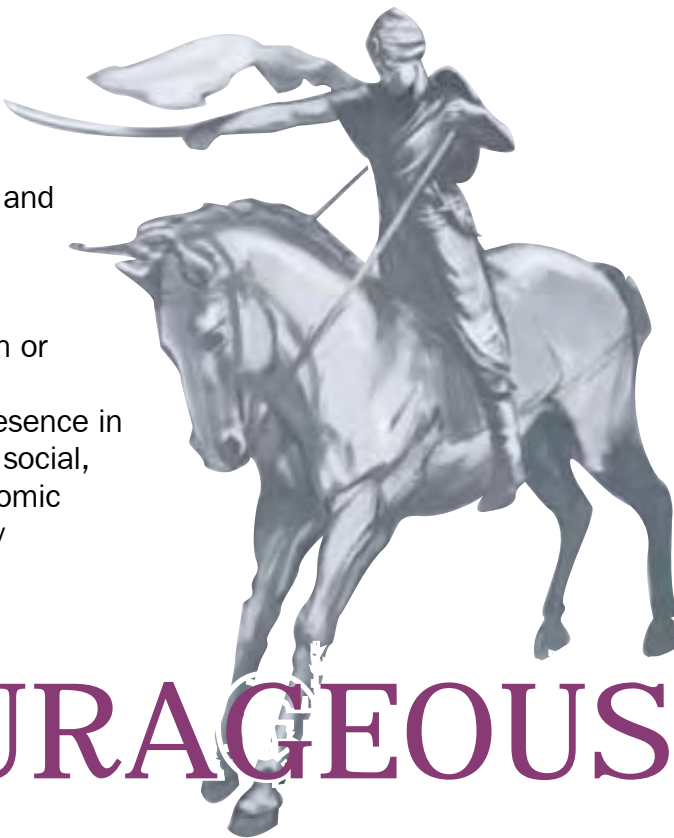
This is considered a highly insulting and blasphemous act that is punishable by Sri Akaal Takht Sahib, as we are violating an order given in 1998, which was again repeated in 2006.

This is a humble plea to all Sikhs, please give Guru Granth Sahib Ji the respect it truly deserves. Let's stop taking Guru Granth Sahib Ji to hotels, and clubs, etc and start using the Gurdware our parents have spent thousand of pounds on building.



In the fifteenth century, Indian women were severely degraded and oppressed by their society.

Given no education or freedom to make decisions, their presence in religious, political, social, cultural, and economic affairs was virtually non-existent.



KAURAGEOUS

Woman was referred to as “man’s shoe, the root of all evil, a snare, a temptress.” Her function was only to perpetuate the race, do household work, and serve the male members of society. Female infanticide was common, and the practice of sati, the sacrifice of the wife on her husband’s funeral pyre, was encouraged, sometimes even forced. Guru Nanak Dev Ji condemned this man-made notion of the inferiority of women, and protested against their long subjugation.

“We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman, we are engaged and married to woman. We make friendship with woman and the lineage continued because of woman. When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman. Why should we talk ill of her, who gives birth to kings? The woman is born from woman; there is none without her.” (Guru Nanak Dev, Var Asa, Ang 473)

Sitting on a horse adorned in the same clothing worn by the rest of the male army, as she fought alongside them. She is a true example of how Sikhs have always represented equality in an age where it was scarcely seen in the rest of the world.

As Sikhs, we should be very proud of the unique stand our religion takes with regard to the equality between men and women, which has been evident since its origin. Women are entitled to lead the congregation, recite from Guru Granth Sahib Ji within the Darbar Sahib and take ‘Amrit’ to name but a few.

After 500 years headstart we must strive to recognise and practice the Guru’s teachings of equality. May we strive to uphold this important principle bestowed upon us at all times.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mata Bhaag Kaur fought in war on horse back, carrying a gun that weighed 100lbs and is estimated to be 10 – 15 feet long.

This is now on display at Hazoor Sahib.

“Guru Nanak Dev Ji condemned this man-made notion of the inferiority of women, and protested against their long subjugation.”

In the 17th century Guru Gobind Singh Ji continued the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, by bestowing the name Kaur (meaning Princess) upon all Sikh Women to give them a unique identity and to defy traditions such as taking the male’s family name upon marriage. Kaur is a name which stays a part of a woman’s identity throughout her life whether married or not.

At a time when witch hunts were still common in the west, and the slave trade was at its height; Guru Nanak Dev Ji rebelled against the stance that society had taken against women in India, and gave them equal status. In Guru Granth Sahib Ji, it states:

Could you ever imagine a woman general in an army? We would find it hard to believe in today’s day and age, never mind in the 17th century over 300 years ago in India!

Yet one woman fulfilled this role - a truly inspirational figure who went by the name of Mata Bhaag Kaur Ji.



Having been born into a family of another faith, my spiritual journey along the path of Sikhism obviously did not begin along with my very first steps.

Growing up, I learned that the turbanned and bearded gentlemen I saw with increasing frequency were followers of a unique religion called Sikhi - a faith that arose during the 15th century in the Punjab region of India - and not Hindus or Muslims. But I certainly never imagined that, a few decades later, in my mid-40s, I would joyously embrace Sikhi and become one of the 25 million members of the Sikh faith, the world's fifth largest religion.

My "date with destiny" arrived quite unannounced one evening via the Internet, during research I was doing on a topic of interfaith significance. My initial reaction to Sikhi was absolute love at first sight; I felt instantly magnetized, both intellectually and emotionally.

by Manjyot Kaur



SIKH WOMAN

"As I began to insatiably devour everything I could find about Sikhi, I was entranced to encounter it not as rigid do's-and-don'ts, but a vibrant spiritual path, universal and timeless. Sikhi is a totally monotheistic religion."

As a woman, I derived enormous satisfaction from learning that Sikhi accords both sexes the exact same status before God, as well as equal access to scriptures and to positions of Sikh religious and political authority.

My attraction ripened into a life-altering spiritual quest. I began delving into the exquisite poetic text of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the compilation of sacred writings imbued with the status of a living, eternal Guru by the tenth and last human Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in 1708.

Exploring these soul-captivating scriptures and trying to incorporate their teachings into my life connected me with the Divine like never before. I knew then that I had arrived at one of those "points of no return" that occur so infrequently over a lifetime: my journey of becoming a Sikh had begun.

With Waheguru's Grace, on the day before Vaisakhi, a holiday that commemorates the 1699 founding of the Sikh nation by Guru Gobind Singh, I was formally initiated into my chosen faith.

While the joys of being a Sikh woman are many, so are the challenges. Here are just a few examples; Celebrating the Gurus' gift of complete gender equality entails being vigilant against any forms of discrimination or other encroachment upon women's rights, whether stemming from the mores of the traditional Punjabi or the Indian sub-continental culture in which Sikhi arose, or elsewhere.

Finding ways to effectively educate the public-at-large about Sikhi and Sikhs' distinctive physical appearance is essential to countering the misinformation and intolerance. Following the lifestyle of a committed Sikh includes regarding the body as a Divine creation and keeping all hair fully intact, requiring acceptance of concepts of beauty that do not always conform to society's notions of femininity.

Embodying the power, grace and dignity inherent in the name given to all Sikh females - Kaur, meaning "princess" - is a challenge we Sikh women successfully face every day.

I feel truly blessed to be one!

The three pillars of the Sikh faith - always keeping God in one's mind and heart, earning an honest livelihood, and sharing one's resources with all those in need - struck me as a simple, rational and relevant "blueprint for everyday life" as an actively engaged, fully contributing member of contemporary society.

The fundamental teachings that Waheguru (as Sikhs refer to God) is an all-pervading Deity, not one limited to any creed, nation, race, color or gender, and that human life is a unique opportunity to discover and nurture the Divine Light residing within all Creation, tremendously appealed to me. I also found the emphasis placed on performing selfless volunteer service compelling.

"While the joys of being a Sikh woman are many, so are the challenges."

Among the many amazingly revolutionary precepts put forth by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the faith, and reinforced by the nine Gurus who succeeded him, was the concept of complete gender equality.

In order for my bond to be more than just a private, internal one, I knew a solemn, public commitment was necessary. My desire to become a legitimate, recognizable member of the Sikh people, inextricably linked to its history and heritage, finally came to fruition one April morning.



Dear Baksho, I recently went to a wedding. But I was shocked to find that the girls' parents had tried to save a few quid by not providing us with any booze. Come on, us Sikhs are renowned for having a good piss up. Is there anything that can be done to prevent this happening again?

Firstly, I'd like to give a big up to the girl's family. It's about time we tried to break a notion which Sikhs are renowned for today. Unfortunately we live in an age where cultural traditions have been confused and combined with religious ceremonies. Drinking alcohol even in small quantities to enjoy its effect is against Sikh principles. Alcohol and liquor are forbidden because of their ill effects on the mind and body. On one hand we are getting married in front of our Guru, asking for their blessing then straight away after the formalities have been done we go and get drunk. So bring on the non-alcoholic weddings!

Dear Baksho, my Legs hurt sitting on the floor, why can't we have chairs in the main hall and langar hall. We're not in the 17th Century any more?

All people irrespective of their status sit on the floor as a sign of equality as opposed to chairs and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is always installed on a higher level as a sign of respect. Furthermore, on April 20, 1998, a HukamNama (edict) was issued from the Supreme Temporal Authority of the Sikhs, Akal Takhat Sahib, and directed all Sikh Gurdwaras to follow the centuries old tradition of partaking Guru-Ka-Langar in the form of a Pangat (on the floor.) The HukamNama directed all Gurdwara's worldwide to remove any chairs and tables used for consuming Langar.

Dear Baksho, if God is everywhere how come my mom and dad make me go to the temple, especially on Sundays? Come on, Sunday is the day of rest!

The Sikh place of worship is known as a Gurdwara not temple and means door of the Guru. As Sikhs we go to the Gurdwara to receive guidance from Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Sikhs bow down in front of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, this is a humbling process and teaches Sikhs to revere the teachings of our great Guru and obey them. In regards to Sundays, everyday is the same for all Sikhs and I agree, Sunday is a day of rest!

Dear Baksho, how am I meant to do mutha tek if my socks have a hole in them?

Shoes and socks are to be removed before entering the main worship hall where Guru Granth Sahib Ji is present. Shoes are removed as they carry dirt and socks are removed due to hygiene. In India all those entering Gurdwara's have to wash their feet (unfortunately this practice is not common place in the west, but advised).

Dear Baksho, I'm a 14 year old girl who used to wear my Kara at school, until recently. My teacher has told me to remove it as it poses a health and safety risk to other students. Is he right to do this?

Recently in the U.K, case law confirms that Sikhs do have a legal right to wear their Kara at school. The case of Sara-Watkins Singh was held in favour of the Sikh girl who was told that she was not allowed to wear her Kara at school, as it did not adhere to their jewellery procedure. Schools are no longer allowed to ask you to remove your Kara.

Dear Baksho, I know that it is important to cover your head, but then why doesn't my dad let me wear a cap or durag instead of a turban?

The Dastaar (turban) is not only to be regarded as a means of covering our heads, the Dastaar is a crown that denotes our royal heritage. Do you really want to give up your crown in favour of a Nike baseball cap? When walking down the street everyone knows you are a Sikh. Have you ever noticed what they call you? Sardaar Ji. With a Dastaar you can never be mistaken for anything else but a Sikh. Wear your Dastaar with pride.

Dear Baksho, I am a regular in my school football team. But one part of my game that is letting me down is struggling to head the ball with my guti, as my hair sometimes opens. Have you got any tips?

Practice a bit more, or ask your mum to tie your guti a bit tighter.

Dear Baksho, why is it that most gianis have beer bellies?

Well, I don't really think it's a beer belly. But I'll have to ask your uncle Mangi because he has the same problem; and remember never judge a giani by his appearance.



Dear Baksho, I am a 19 year old girl who wants to get married to my life long friend Jassi (not his real name), but my parents have told me that I'm not allowed, as he's a farmer (but he suffers from hay fever), and little did I know, but I am supposed to be a carpenter (but don't ask me the difference between a jigsaw or a chisel). Are my parents being fair?

I think that your parents know best! Only joking...well my Guru says that we shouldn't differentiate between people based on caste. The caste system is a Hindu tradition which our Gurus denounced. We are to treat all human beings as equal.

Dear Baksho, I recently travelled abroad to the USA, while going through boarding I was given a full body search, which wasn't a problem. The problem was, security asked me to remove my turban in front of everyone. I was hugely embarrassed, were they right to do this?

If you go through airport security, security are only allowed to search your turban with a metal detector hand wand. If the detector alarms and you are asked to remove your turban, you are legally allowed to ask to do this in a private area. If they ask to pat down your turban, always request to pat down your own turban first, which they should allow you to do.

Dear Baksho, what is that brown sweet stuff that you get when you go to the temple and how come people stare at me funny when it drops on the floor? A couple of times I've rubbed it into the carpet, but once a baba told me off. Was I wrong?

I think the brown stuff you are referring to is known as Karah Parshad (I hope). Karah Parshad is divine food made from equal proportions of water, flour, ghee and sugar. It was first produced by Guru Nanak Dev Ji when angels came to test the Guru by asking him for some food to eat, the angels purposely had no teeth and thought they could trick the Guru, but the true Guru could not be outdone, so he made this sweet meal which they could all easily consume. Karah Parshad is blessed in the Gurdwara in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, during the Ardas by a Sikh placing a Kirpan (ceremonial dagger) into the offer and drawing it back out, Sikhs believe that if the sweet meal has been cooked with true devotion the Guru will eat it himself and bless it.

When we drop parshad on the floor, it should be picked up and eaten out of respect because the food has been blessed by God. The baba was unfortunately right in telling you off.

SIKHPARK



Email your questions to baksho@see-q.net

Sikh park is created by Dalbir
www.sikhchic.com

The divine light of God was bestowed on Guru Nanak Dev Ji in 1469. He in turn imparted the light to Bhai Lehna who then became Guru Angad Dev Ji. To show his reverence to the divine light Guru Nanak Dev Ji paid obeisance to the new Guru. In this way the divine light has been conferred to all ten Gurus. Although the divine light remained the same, the bodies of the Gurus changed. The body through age deteriorates but the divine light is timeless.

It's Not a Book

On 30th October 1708 the tenth Guru passed on the divine light to the Shabad Guru that we revere in its embodiment, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

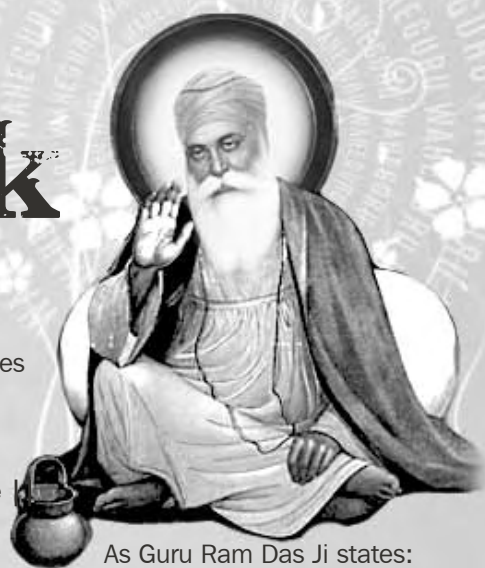
Consequently Shabad Guru is the same divine light that was in Guru Nanak Dev Ji - a living Guru.

The Gurus were not Guru in body but Guru when they personified the divine light. Guru Nanak Dev Ji reveals this when he was asked...

The answer is that this Bani comes direct from the Lord himself.

**"Dhhur kee baanee aae ||
thin sagalee chi(n)th mittaaee ||"**

The Bani of His Word emanated from the Primal Lord. It has the power to help us eradicate the problems we face in society today. (Ang 627)



As Guru Ram Das Ji states:
**Baanee guroo guroo hai baanee vich
baanee a(n)mrit saarae ||
The Word, the Bani is Guru, and
Guru is the Bani. Within the Bani,
the Ambrosial Nectar is contained.
(Ang 982)**

Sabh Sikhaun Ko Hukam Hai Guru Manyo Granth, Guru Granth Ji Maneyo Pargat Guraan ki Deh
To all Sikhs, let this be your order, recognise the Granth as your Guru now

Who's your Guru?

This is the question the Sikhs asked Guru Nanak Dev Ji...

**Thaeraa kavan guroo jis kaa thoo
chaelaa ||**

**Who is your Guru? Whose disciple
are you? (Ang 942)**

His simple reply was

**Sabadh guroo surath dhhun
chaelaa ||**

**The Shabad is the Guru, upon whom
I lovingly focus my consciousness; I
am the chayload, the disciple.**

The almighty Guru Nanak Dev Ji had become the disciple, and humbly uttered that the Shabad (scriptures within Guru Granth Sahib Ji) is his Guru. It is hard to believe that we fail to see the Shabad in the same way as it was viewed by Guru Nanak Dev Ji many centuries ago. However the question remains; what makes this Bani so special and so different?

The Shabad of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji gives us support and guidance in our daily lives. Many of us have heard of the daily Hukamnama. But do we really know what this is? Or what its purpose is? We can present our thoughts and problems to the Guru through the recital of the Ardaas (prayer). Following the Ardaas, we allow the Guru Granth Sahib Ji to be opened, the Ang on which it falls opens will provide the Hukamnama (royal decree), **This Hukamnama is the advice from Waheguru (God) in the form of a Shabad reading from the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.** This provides us with the advice we need.

Even in the times of the Gurus, the Guru was not the physical body, but the words (Shabad) which were spoken. Today it is not the physical pages that make the Guru Granth Sahib Ji but the Shabad within, which give guidance for our daily lives.

The last of the mortal Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, brought the lineage of living Gurus to an end and declared the scriptures in the form of Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. On the land of Nanded, where now stands Hazoor Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh Ji bowed down in front of Guru Granth Sahib Ji and uttered:

**"Sabh Sikhaun Ko Hukam Hai Guru
Manyo Granth, Guru Granth Ji Maneyo
Pargat Guraan ki Deh"**

**"To all Sikhs, let this be your order,
recognise the Granth as your Guru
now"**

This is a humble plea to all Sikhs, let us come together to break the notion that Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a book, but in reality it's our living Guru.

It is not a book, it is

Four hundred years ago, in 1604, the fifth Sikh Master, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, compiled the Ad(i) Granth and installed it in the Harmandir, known the world over as the Golden Temple. A hundred years later, in 1708, the canon was completed and sealed, and the Ad(i) Granth became the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. In today's global village, it allows us to engage successfully with the many modern dilemmas that come our way everyday.

by I J Singh

Living Word

To the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib Ji is more than just a collation of scriptural writing. To us, Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a living presence and not a mere book that may be stashed in a bookshelf or in the drawer of a nightstand at a hotel.

Of all religions, the best religion is To utter the hojy name with love, and do good deeds. Of all tempies, the most sacred is (Says Nanak) The heart in which God dwells. (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Sukhmani, Astpad 3, Pauri 8, ang 266)

Guru Granth Sahib Ji asks humans to recognize the divinity within each of us (ang 441). Human life becomes a unique opportunity to discover the divinity within us and others. This voyage of discovery of the infinite within our lives becomes the purpose of human existence. This translates to the pursuit of a truthful life that nurtures the universal connectivity by service to community and creation. A life that perceives God in all sees no enemy.

Guru Granth Sahib Ji asks from us not a life of renunciation, but a life of productive involvement in society. Marry, have a family, earn an honest living, and share your rewards with fellow humans, and live this life with your mind centered on the Infinite within you. The life of a recluse is not the model to be emulated or admired.

The idea is not of a God who micromanages our existence, but to provide the spiritual basis for a moral and ethical framework around which purposeful lives can be fashioned. Guru Granth Sahib Ji does not provide a sin quotient for every infraction committed or contemplated. Some may think this to be a weakness - a chink in the teaching. I find it our strength because it demands responsibility and accountability from each of us.

In the final analysis, self-awareness and a life of introspection are recommended: Guru Granth Sahib Ji, ang 922. It asks us,

"In this life what did you accomplish; what footprints have you left in the sands of time?"

Life will serve us many dilemmas that will test us. Time and technology will bring us new bioethical problems and issues of life and death. Our response will evolve with time and technology in a changing world. What we need is not cut-and-dried solutions or an easily swallowed pill, but an ethical framework within which to navigate our way.

Sikhs do not worship the Gurus who composed the writings in Guru Granth Sahib Ji, nor do they need to idolize the holy scriptures, though they revere it. The Word is God. But the only way it actually becomes so is when the Sikh reads it and heeds what he reads.

"The Word is the manifest spirit of the Guru; The Guru is immanent in the Word" (ang 982).

And this is how Guru Granth Sahib Ji speaks to a Sikh.

our LIVING GURU.

Sikhs...

Sikhs have added a little something in their own special way to Britain.

In Gravesend, a street owned by the 'Guru Nanak Gurdwara,' was named, 'Khalsa Avenue,' whilst in Coventry, Joginder Singh Nagra was responsible for introducing Punjabi GCSE's and A'Levels to the National Curriculum, and in Scotland, Lord Iqbal Singh was largely responsible for the introduction of the 'Singh Tartan' commissioning the renowned Lochcarron firm, who had designed the Princess Diana Tartan, in Galashiels. The ancient Sikh martial art of 'Gatka' was first introduced to Britain in the mid 1980's, becoming an internationally known and recognised martial art. Amongst the longest established Sikh martial arts team in Britain is the 'Baba Fateh Singh Gatka Akhara,' founded in 1992, who featured in the prestigious 'Seni 2004' martial arts show at Birmingham's NEC. The team led by its chief instructor Uptej Singh, has toured the world and at home has entertained the Prince of Wales as well as participating at the Lord Mayor's Parade. In 2002 they performed at the Queen's Golden Jubilee procession at the Pall Mall and are looking to lead the London 2012 Olympics opening ceremony.

The involvement of Sikhs in mainstream television and cinema had been slow in the ascendancy. But the 1990's saw comics such as Kulvinder Ghir in the BBC's hit 'Goodness Gracious Me' and stand-up Scotsman comedian Hardeep Kohli on terrestrial television. Behind the scenes, Sikh women have been flying the flag in production and direction. Southall-bred Gurinder Chadha began her career as a BBC news reporter with her first break in directing the Channel 4 documentary 'I'm British But...' in 1989, and in 1994 her first feature film 'Bhaji On The Beach' received a BAFTA Nomination and won the Evening Standard British Film Award for 'Best Newcomer to British Cinema'. In 1995 she directed 'Rich Deceiver,' a two-part drama for the BBC, but her biggest success came with 'Bend It Like Beckham' and a musical based on Jane Austen's 'Pride And Prejudice' with a Bollywood twist, starring Aishwarya Rai.

Fauja Singh came to Britain in 1992 from Jalandhar to live with his son. The great grandfather became homesick and turned his attentions to running. Fauja Singh lined up for his first Flora London Marathon at the age of 89 in 2000, which he completed in 6 hours and 54 minutes, clocking the same time the following year and set a world record for a 90 year old. Fauja has become the oldest runner in the London Marathon. Fauja Singh is the holder of eleven world records at distances up to a marathon. He has run seven Marathon races in London, and also in New York and Toronto raising thousands for various charities (including B.L.I.S.S) and promoting Sikh culture around the world. Fauja Singh's fame has even knocked off David Beckham as Adidas's new poster boy. In 2004, 94 year old Fauja Singh was signed up for their advertising campaign 'Impossible is Nothing'.

Nottinghamshire County cricket player Mudhsuden 'Monty' Panesar became the first Sikh to represent England at international level. The left-arm spinner's first scalp in his debut test match was that of legendary Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar. The Luton born bowler has fast established himself as a regular in the England team, filling the gap of a much yearned for quality spin bowler in the squad.

Sikhs have diversified into many fields in Britain, earlier excelling greatly in the building trade and motor mechanics. The spirit of the Sikhs has shown how they have bettered themselves at every step, many entering into business enterprise with long established families moving on from retail, particularly grocery, to becoming landlords and property investors. The new British-born generations have been encouraged within the arena of education and academia, competing for jobs at the highest level. Thus proving to be one of the most successful and productive communities in Britain.



Name: Fauja Singh

Age: 97

Location: London, England

About him

Fauja Singh was born April 1, 1911. He is a marathon runner in his nineties and is a world-record holder in his age bracket. His current marathon record, for aged over 90, is 5 hours 40 minutes. In athletic terms, Fauja admits he is a "late developer".

His interests:

Walking and jogging 8 to 10 miles everyday.

How did he get into running?

He was an amateur runner in the Punjab before giving up the sport in 1947 at the age of 36. However, when his wife died and Fauja Singh moved to London to live with his youngest son he decided to don the trainers and pound the streets again.

Where do I get my inspiration from?

Nothing Is Impossible "Most elderly people in Britain eat a rich diet, don't move about and only travel in cars, and that makes them sick. I am very careful about different foods. My diet is simple phulka, dal, green vegetables, yoghurt and milk. I do not touch parathas, pakoras, rice or any other fried food. I take lots of water and tea with ginger".

His Ambitions in life

His personal trainer Harminder Singh says 'he can still run for a few more years. And perhaps in two years he might be the oldest man to run a Marathon.'

His message to the Sikh youth

"I go to bed early taking the name of my Rabba [God] as I don't want all those negative thoughts crossing my mind. I Run While Talking to God. I am very happy that I have been able to do this and it's God's gift that people like me are able to do it for others who come later on".

Fauja Singh won a sponsorship deal from Adidas and donated the £3,000 he earned from a photo-shoot to premature babies charity BLISS.



Name: Kiranjit Kaur Matharu

Age: 18

Location: Leeds, UK

Website: www.kiranmatharu.com

About her

She is a professional golfer playing on the European Ladies Tour. She travels around Europe all year playing in tournaments.

Her interests:

Golf, Music & family.

How did she get into golf?

"I started playing when I was 11 years old. I went to watch my dad practice on the driving range and I ended up hitting some golf balls too. The professional coach there later came over to talk to my dad and he said that I should play golf seriously because he has never seen a girl hit a ball like that before. So the next day I got some golf clubs and started playing".

Where does she get her inspiration from?

"I get my inspiration from Tiger Woods because he is a great sportsman and from Nick Faldo because he's my mentor and he's helped me so much in my career".

Her ambitions in life

"To be successful in my career and to be a good role model for young Sikhs".

Her message to the Sikh youth

"Be ambitious in whatever you want to do. Don't waste your life. Be a good Sikh".



Name: Mudhsuden Singh Panesar

Age: 25

Location: Luton, UK

Website:

www.monty-panesar.com

About him

With his black patka, softly spoken Bedfordshire burr and eager (if sometimes comical) fielding, he has rapidly become the fan's favourite. With his plate-sized hands, he is England's most prized spinner in over a decade.

His interests

Panesar is a devoted Luton Town fan and is often seen at matches. Yoga, tennis, badminton, and snooker.

How did he get into cricket?

The son of a carpenter who liked cricket and took his small son along to score in his club games.

Where does he get his inspiration from?

"I try to live each moment as it comes. I don't think ahead and I don't think about the past. For me to prepare for a Test I've got to focus on the present. Do that, and the future will look after itself".

His ambitions in life

"I see that a multi-dimensional cricketer has more impact on modern cricket. That's what I want to be and that's what I train to be".

His message to the Sikh youth

"I follow Sikhism, and maybe I've channelled the discipline that religion creates into my cricket. There's discipline with any religion, and you can take it into a game or into anything else".



Name: Hardeep Singh Kholi

Age: 39

Location: Glasgow, Scotland

About him

He is a writer and broadcaster. He reports for BBC1's The One Show and has presented Newsnight Review. He makes radio documentaries with his production company, Above The Title.

His interests

I love cooking, shopping, clothes, buying new shoes and football, and I love working.

How did he get into the media?

"My dad is a landlord and he used to take me out with him when he visited properties. He would leave me in the car while he went and had a cup of tea and tried to bargain them down, I would listen to talk radio".

Where does he get his inspiration from?

"I generally describe myself as a writer because I think that covers everything, but I will do almost any work if it is something I'm engaged with. I find it very difficult to do things I don't believe in".

His ambitions in life

"When Jonathan Ross retires I'd like to think he'd give me his Radio 2 show and his BBC1 show. I've got the suits lined up".

His message to the Sikh youth

"Of all the religions in the world, Sikhism is the grooviest, youngest and most accepting. It's the only religion I know where you can go to the temple and eat for free. It's a socialist religion – and food is at the heart of it. You can be the wealthiest man in Punjab or the lowliest cowherd, but together you sit and share the same delicious meal."

..In Britain Today

(extracts from Sikhs in Britain, by Peter Bance, Suttons, 2007)





BCFA WORK WITHIN THE ASIAN SIKH COMMUNITY

We at the Birmingham County Football Association implement the goals and values of the Football Association at a local level. We form one of the largest County FA's across the UK and have over 2400 clubs under our banner which span across The West Midlands and Warwickshire region

Football is a fashionable sport that is immensely popular and is widely recognised as an integral and central part of the British culture, as football excites passion, attracts allegiances and is at the heart of many personal identities. However despite this football also causes division and exclusion which we hope to diminish.



One of the main initiatives spearheaded by The Football Association is the aim to get more minorities into football. Campaigns such as Get into Football and Football For All, both help us send out the message that racism plays no part of our national game.

Collectively we believe football should be accessible to all corners of the community regardless of ability, race, religion or background. We are about encouraging and increasing the involvement of groups at all levels of football by recognising that inequalities exist and taking steps to address them and making opportunities available where currently there are few.

In line with this BCFA have took part and supported a number of events for the BME community to encourage them to get into the game. Our work especially within the Asian community has received national recognition as we proactively have opened the game to the Asian community.

Working closely with the BCFA the group aim to ensure that the voices of extended groups across football are heard in order for us to work towards racial equality in football within the region.

Most recently the BCFA have organised international Bhangra star H Dhami to undertake an FA Level 1 coaching badge in order to inspire further Asians into getting into football by taking the first step onto the FA coaching ladder. With the qualification H Dhami has coached a number of school kids within the vicinity to use his positive iconic figure to inspire the youngsters to follow in his footsteps.

The BCFA also helped support local football tournaments which help to break down barriers in the realm of football and bring Asians to the forefront within football.

The BCFA also support various seminars and have our own Race Equality Group which proactively ensures that the needs of ethnic minorities are represented and met within the region. The race equality group encompasses a cross section of people from the melting pot of cultures which make up the community. Working closely with the BCFA the group aim to ensure that the voices of extended groups across football are heard in order for us to work towards racial equality in football within the region.



Covering the 4 cornerstones of football development Education, Club Development, Coaching and Volunteering Development and Equity and Inclusion together we hope to honour our vision by providing the necessary structures and initiatives within these areas to see that barriers are broken down and that racial inclusion remains prominent throughout grassroots football.

This is just a handful of initiatives that the BCFA take part in within the Asian Community. For further information on the work we carry out please visit www.birminghamfa.com

Mool Mantar

Ik Onkaar
There is only one God.

Sat Naam
Truth is his name

Kartaa Purakh
He is the creator

Nirbhao
He is without fear

Nirvair
He is without hate

Akaal Moorat
He is timeless and without form

Ajoonee Saibhang
He is beyond birth and death, The enlightened one

Gur Parsaad
He can be known by the Guru's grace

Jap
Embrace His meditation

Aad Sach.
He was present in the beginning

Jugaad Sach
He was present before the Yugas (ages) began.

Hai Bhee Sach
He is present now

Naanak Hosee Bhee Sach. ||1||
(Guru) Nanak (Dev Ji) says that he shall certainly be present in the future.

The Mool Mantar is the most important composition contained within the Guru Granth Sahib Ji; it is the basis of Sikhism. Together the words Mool Mantar mean the Main chant or root verse.

It's importance is emphasised by the fact that it is the first composition to appear in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and that it appears before the commencement of most of the Raags within the Sikh holy scripture.

This is the verse that all beginners to Sikhism should learn and repeat. After learning this short verse and its full meaning, it is common for beginners to awake early in the morning, and meditate on the Mantar.

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Football is a common language. This has helped to foster a global industry worth millions of dollars. Over 4.5 million people across 204 different countries watch Premier League football every year. No surprise then that British Football Clubs have scrambled to take advantage of the countless commercial opportunities that these facts provide. But there has been an inevitable downside. As the perceived wealth of the game has increased so has, in many people's eyes, the gulf between football clubs and their local communities. However, Wolverhampton Wanderers is attempting to buck that trend. Whilst, unashamedly, Wolves' goal is to be promoted to the game's elite, the club has put the local community at the heart of its long-term plans - both at home and abroad. So where's the evidence?

Well, only recently Wolves announced that its award winning Football in the Community department was to apply for charitable status and become the 'Wolves Community Trust.' The new Trust will be able to apply for third party funding to rapidly expand its social inclusion, education and health initiatives in the local community. It's hoped that by 2010 the Wolves Community Trust will double in size and positively impact thousands of local children and young adults every year.

In addition, Wolves donates £150,000 to local charities and community groups every year.



According to the Football League Trust, Wolves now has the largest charity of its type in club football. For more information visit: www.wolves-aid.co.uk.

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One of the club's proudest achievements has been its participation in the Wolverhampton India partnership, a collaboration of public and private sector bodies in Wolverhampton, formed to improve links with India.

This initiative has led to the formation of a community-led partnership with Indian Premier League side, JCT Football Club. The aim of the deal is to swap ideas and facilitate exchange visits between the two clubs.

For Wolves, the ultimate aim is to build on the fantastic support of Punjabi Wolves, one of its biggest and most active fan groups.

Over 17% of the local Wolverhampton community is from an Indian background and Punjabi Wolves now has over 300 members. It has helped the club to build its Asian supporter base and to communicate better with supporters from ethnic minorities.

However, you don't have to be Punjabi to be a member of Punjabi Wolves. Wolves' Chief Executive, Jez Moxey and First Team Assistant manager, Terry Connor are just two of Punjabi Wolves' higher profile non-Punjabi members!!

Wolves are driven to succeed both on the pitch and in the local community. But it can't achieve everything on its own. Wolves and Punjabi Wolves continue to prove that two heads are better than one and they are determined to bring more supporters, from all ages and backgrounds, into the football club for the benefit of the local community.



WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS FC + PUNJABI WOLVES

Affiliations to football teams have changed over the last decade with the advent of wall to wall television coverage and the globalisation of the game where it matters not where you come from.

As a result some of the big Premier League clubs call upon support from all corners of the globe. However for clubs like Wolverhampton Wanderers, who sit outside the top flight of English football, building support in the local community is vital.

What is interesting is that where clubs are primarily reliant on support from local communities few have responded to the changing demographic picture as well as Wolverhampton Wanderers.

The city of Wolverhampton has been 'home' to people from the Indian sub-continent since the 1950s and today hosts one of the largest Indian population in the country, however whereas other cities including Leicester struggled to attract significant Indian support the Wolves Indian following turn up in significant numbers. So what is the key to success?

As the author will testify watching Wolves has not always been a racism-free tolerance activity. Being a black or Asian person at a football match in the late 1970s/early 1980s could be very intimidating. Yet we persisted, mainly because supporting Wolves was testimony to our undivided loyalty to the place that had become 'home'. Whilst Wolverhampton had become 'home' our ancestral roots ensured we never forgot where we had come from Punjab.

A membership in excess of 300, Website, sponsorship of first team players, commendations from senior figures in the government, charitable endeavours

There was never any question of divided loyalties we were proud to be both Punjabi and from Wolverhampton, this led to the coining of the name: Punjabi Wolves. (two years ago PW raised £29k in a single night for a local charity supporting children with terminal illness) and a lead role in developing the first strategic partnership between an English club and a team from India's professional football league Punjabi Wolves can be very proud of their achievements.

JCT Mills Chairman – Samir Thapar said his club had received a number of approaches to form partnerships from all over Europe but none had come with the backing of such a prominent Punjabi influence.

Punjabi Wolves were also influential in the decision made by Wolverhampton Wanderers to permit Kirpan wearing Sikhs to watch live professional football. Another first!

All of this would not be possible without the contribution of people who are committed and passionate about Wolverhampton Wanderers and their 'seva' (service) to their community, city and football club.

For more information please visit www.punjabiwolves.co.uk

by Jas Bains

In November 06 I visited Punjab and headed straight for Amritsar. I travelled on the train from Delhi and knew I had entered Punjab when I looked out of the window to find myself surrounded by green fields and cows. As I excitedly reminded myself that I was in India, on a train, going to the Golden Temple my thoughts were interrupted by local people making their morning visits to the fields to 'go to the loo'. Modest they are not!

I walked towards the entrance to the temple complex. The gold shone in the sun and looked awesome. Men regressed to boys as their excitement got the better of them and people tried to sell me useless crap outside. "Yep, I'm at Molineux!"

Just as at every home game, everyone was there for a common purpose. People from all over the world had come together to visit this auspicious place. Chants of "only one Mick McCarthy" had been replaced with mantras of "only one God".

Women had covered their heads with scarves, not to shield their ears from the wind or preserve their new hair-do as at Wolves, but in respect for the Guru Granth Sahib Ji inside the temple. Men also had their 'uniform' of head wear, but in Amritsar it was a Turban or bandana, and not a beanie or baseball cap; and just as a Wolves fan can be spotted by the metal badge on their jacket, Sikhs can be spotted by the metal bangle on their wrist.

"I'd waited years for the opportunity to visit THE holiest place for Sikhs, to eat THE Langar (food in a communal kitchen) and to listen to THE Gurbani (poems) from THE Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scriptures). When I arrived my immediate thought was....."I'm at Molineux!"

As I approached the centre of Amritsar the crowds got dense. I was soon surrounded by mainly men and being swept along in the general direction of the Golden Temple – at least I didn't need to ask for directions! The atmosphere was electric. Everyone was excited, anticipating the wondrous spectacle of the Golden Temple and the day's events. When I arrived I decided to stay the night at the temple in one of the many rooms available to the public and dumped my bags. With shoes removed and heads covered

The half time communal kitchen of Bovril and Balti pies was now Dhal and Chapattis – and the best I've ever tasted.

As the days proceedings came to an end everyone scrambled to get close to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji being taken to its resting place for the night, in a building opposite the Golden Temple. Men pushed and shoved each other to get to the sedan chair (Palki) that was carrying the Holy Scriptures so that they could experience its weight on their shoulders until the next man pushed him away. Again, I was reminded of the struggle to get out of the turnstiles and onto Waterloo Road and back to the car. It was now darkness, but out of it cometh light and the greatness of the golden building still shone.

For the atmosphere, auspiciousness, bostin' food, great people and stunning architecture the Golden Temple and Molineux are my favourite places in the world.

by Louise Griffiths

WOLF IN A LION'S DEN



It is my hope that upon reading this article, our intellectual brethren will take note of the wonderful message in Gurbani and counterbalance the misplaced view that only science represents the truth and has all the answers and the two, religion and science, should be kept at arms length. As a very learned man once said;

“Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind.” (Albert Einstein, Science, Philosophy and Religion: A symposium 1941 Chapter 13).

My colleagues and I are under the opinion that Sikhism and science are not incompatible but complementary. In many ways science today is simply corroborating what the Sikh Gurus had said and recorded centuries ago.

On 7th January 1610, an Italian physicist Galileo Galilee (1564-1642) theorised that “There are millions of stars which get together to form the Milky Way”. According to the latest estimate of the scientists there are more than 40 thousand million stars in the Milky Way alone.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) wrote, “There are earths, beyond earths, beyond earths (SGGS p. 3)” and “There are skies above skies and earths below earths. Human mind gets tired of search. All knowledge simply points to the one fact that there is no end of vastness.” (ANG 5) “There is no end to the creation of the Lord” (SGGS p. 3). About the sun and the moon he said, “There are numerous suns, moons and other galaxies.” (ANG 7).

Scientists, state, that Hydrogen and oxygen gases in the air combined to form water (H₂O) and life emerged from water some 350 million years ago. According to Alister Hardy’s ‘aquatic ape theory’ (1960) living creatures began to emerge from water when the ozone layer on the earth became thick enough to protect the living creatures from the lethal rays of space.

Our Guru says, “From the True Lord came the air, and from the air came water. From water, He created the three worlds (of life in water, on earth and in air); in each and every heart He has infused His Light.”

Science & Sensibility

The sun is slowly but surely burning out, the stars are dying ambers, and everywhere in the universe the cosmic heat is turning into cold, matter is dissolving into radiation, and energy is being dissipated into empty space. The universe is thus progressing to an ultimate heat death and there is no way of avoiding this destiny.” (The universe and Dr. Einstein p. 102).

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji states, “Beauty disintegrates, islands disintegrate, and the sun, the moon, the stars and sky are fading away. The earth, mountains, forests and all lands will fade away.” (ANG 1354).

In 1977 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute’s divers went underwater in Pacific Ocean’s Galapagos rift where they discovered living plants in the underwater volcanic cracks. The rift water has a temperature of 3990C. Ordinarily life does not survive in such high temperatures. Since then, 295 other new species of life (called pyrococcus furiosus) have been discovered in the hot waters of the Galapagos rift alone.

Guru Granth Sahib Ji says, “Such is our Lord that He provides sustenance even to those that exist in fire.” (ANG 488).

A scientist named Hooke proved in 1660 that “air is essential for respiration and that there is no substitute for it” (Taylor’s History of Science p.95).

Our Guru’s stated years earlier “Born of water, life is sustained by air.” (ANG 884).

It should be understood that the Sikh Gurus were not scientists nor trained in scientific methods. Yet they provided tremendous insights into the workings of the natural and physical world.

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji tells us about so many things, many of which we were unable to mention, we just need to take the time to understand the messages it beholds. If the scientists quoted above had studied the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, society would have saved hundreds of years in obtaining answers that had already been given to us by our Guru Ji.

CROWNING GL

“I want my boys to know that those twenty minutes in the morning show my commitment to our identity. I want them proud of. That being different is cool (their words not mine). That they are my shining stars.”

Oh my goodness! What a day! I'm not what you would consider over emotional but my world rocked! (well, at least the room I was sitting in anyway!)

Today, my teenage nephew tied his very first turban, ever. Today, he showed the world that he chose to be a Sikh, over and above being born a Sikh.

We attended his dastaar bandhi ceremony, a long respected Sikh tradition of tying a turban for the first time, of affirming his resolve to continue doing what his father and grandfather and many generations before them had done, as a symbol of their Sikh identity.

But what was it about the simple ceremony that had overwhelmed not just me, but many others present on the occasion?

True, the paat recitation had been meaningful and the kirtan was soul-stirring, but that was normal - that's how paat and kirtan make you feel every single time. But soon after the ardaas that day, having asked for the Almighty's blessings and approval for the ceremony, family members brought out a maroon turban, and tied it around the young man's head, sitting gracefully in front of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

“Layer after layer, the turban was wrapped, and eyeful after eyeful, the tears flowed.”

What was it about the dastaar that made us all so emotional?

Was it the fact that this young man, born and brought up a million miles away from my religion and background, had publicly affirmed a tradition that began centuries ago on a different continent?

Was it that he was showing the rest of the world that he was proud to carry on with the teachings of his forefathers?

Was it because this is a way of life that has led us through generations, to be the strong united community we had become?

I'm so proud! He has chosen this path because he wanted to. Not because it was something his uncle's son's daughter's wanted! my commitment to our identity.

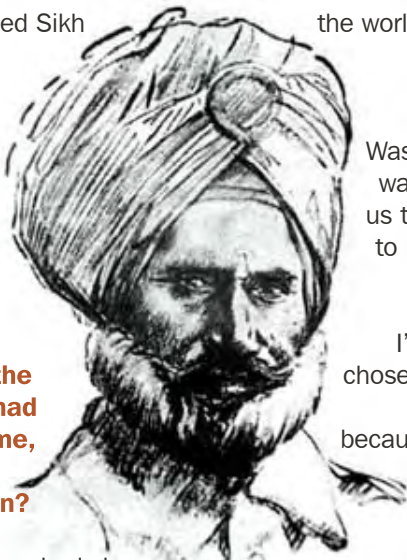
In my day (and I'm not all that old), you did things because you were told, or got a resounding whack from the nearest relative.

The only choices you had then was whether you would avoid the second smack because they didn't quite catch you the first time round!

Generations ago, sons and daughters just adopted family traditions without pausing to question them. Customs, traditions and concepts, preserved as family heirlooms, were transferred down many generations without much dilution or alteration.

Today it's all different. Children need to question everything - and get a logical answer.

Today's children do not comply that easily. In finding answers for them I too learn. I need to find an answer that they can understand and take away with them. To know they can confidently go out and show that they know Sikhi and understand what it's all about.



DD YOU KNOW?

Major Singh... wears the largest paag in the world, measuring a massive 400 metres of cloth, some 100 hairpins, and embellished with 51 religious symbols made in metal.

Sardaar means commander in Persian.

ORY

by Manpreet Kaur Singh

m to understand that it's something to be

Perhaps, apart from according a "uniform" to the Sikhs, the unshorn hair and the covering of it with a patka/dastaar has a deeper logic, too - it keeps the followers disciplined by mandating an outward appearance that is non-negotiable. It extends the logic to personal life, as well, that certain principles and concepts enshrined in the faith are non-negotiable. It gives youngsters the moral courage to dare to be different (and proudly so) from an early age, and affords them an opportunity as young adults to publicly proclaim that they are willing to take the tradition forward, to accept its physical manifestation and its spiritual one.

So, perhaps while I'm sitting here watching my nephew during his dastaar bandhi, I am deeply touched by all the symbolism it represents. As I told him, it is perhaps the biggest gift a child can give his family - of putting his hand up to carry on the family tradition and trying to abide by all the spiritual significance it entails.

Now, I look forward to not just my own two sons giving me a chance to revel in my tears (again!), but also the sons of many other parents around the world, doing their best to keep this age-old tradition alive. I hope and pray for my nephew and others like him, that after being born as Sikhs, I hope they see the value in choosing to be Sikh and then, through their actions, prove to be the ultimate Sikhs.

Till then, I'll keep my tears at bay.

Seven years ago, sporting a Sikh turban could get you killed, as was Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner who was shot September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona, U.S.A., after his murderer mistook him for a Muslim.

SIKHI SILEIK

by Julia Duin

Today, the trademark head-covering sported by male members of the Sikh religion can get you into the heights of mens' fashion. Sandeep Singh, grew up in rural North Carolina, as the son of a doctor and the wearer of a turban, ever since he was a small child. His family is from Punjab, India.

He has never cut his hair, as all Sikhs have been required to keep their hair unshorn since 1699. For males, it is always covered by a turban or a similar headdress.

"Having a unique identity can be a very lonely road to walk down", the model said. "Fighting against a negative stereotype is consistently tough"

Some time ago - he does not know when - Kenneth Cole, founder of a clothing line by the same name, got an idea for an advertising campaign on breaking stereotypes, while plugging clothing.

Mr. Cole hired a casting agency to find a male Sikh willing to be a model. The man had to be American-born, highly educated and articulate. There being no candidates on the usual lists, the agency began calling up national Sikh-rights organizations and Sandeep heard Cole was looking. One thing led to another and last October, he found himself in New York posing in some pretty spiffy clothes along with that turban.

"People think Sikhs are fundamentalist, outside the mainstream of society, or immigrants or something is wrong with them", Sandeep said in a visit to my office recently. "Kenneth Cole wanted to represent the fabric of American culture. There's a lot of struggle in the United States as to how we perceive people post-9/11. I am as much American as anyone else".

His choice of a Sikh to represent an American Everyman has made headlines in newspapers in India, where Sikhs number some 25 million adherents, a drop in the ocean compared with the country's huge Hindu majority. There are about 500,000 Sikhs in the United States.

"I've heard from thousands of people around the world on how they appreciated this", Sandeep said. He hopes his day in the sun will encourage Sikh youth, whose unusual headcovering makes them stand out in a crowd.

All Sikhs know what it's like to be harassed, he said, and his brother-in-law has endured worse: physical threats, job discrimination and taunts, just for being confused with Muslims. Kenneth Cole had heard of what Sikhs endure, he said, and wanted to include a Sikh in an ad campaign to introduce the concept that Sikhs are normal folk who wear cool clothes and think like us.

Is there a point at which such clothing, worn for modesty or to express devotion to God, should not be used as a fashion statement, no matter how noble its objectives?

In the case of the Sikhs, Sandeep is the first such American model and a groundbreaker in illustrating how Sikhs and other Indians have arrived as part of the American scene.



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t: 07909 872556
e: info@amcfinancial.co.uk

Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage or any other debt secured on it. There will be a fee for mortgage advice. The precise amount will depend upon your circumstances, but we estimate that it will be 1% of the loan value.

Punjabi Classes

Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Sat: 12.00 – 13.00 Sun: 11.00 – 13.00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Willenhall)	Sun: 10.30 – 12.45
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara (W'ton)	Sat: 9.00 – 14.30 Sun: 9.00 – 14.30
Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Sun: 10.00 – 12.00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Wednesfield)	Sun: 10.30 – 12.00 Wed: 18.00 – 19.30

Gurbani Santhia

Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Sun: : 18:30 - 20:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Willenhall)	Mon & Tues: 17:00 - 19:00
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara (W'ton)	Wed & Thurs: 18:00 - 20:30
Nanaksar Thath Gurdwara (W'ton)	Wed: 18:00 - 21:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Smethwick)	Wed: 18:00 - 19:00 (beginners)
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Smethwick)	Wed: 19:00 - 20:00 (advanced)

Kirtan Santhia

Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Sun: 16:00 - 18:00
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara (W'ton)	Mon & Tues: 17:00 - 19:00

Kirtan Naam Simran

Singh Sabha Gurdwara (Coventry)	1st Sat every month: 18:00 - Late
Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara (Coventry)	Sat: 04:00 - 07:00
Ramgharia Gurdwara (Coventry)	Sat: 09:00 - 11:00
Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara (Leicester)	Fri: 19:00 - 21:00
Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Wed: 18:00 - 20:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Smethwick)	Mon: 19:30 - 20:30
Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Tues: 12:00 - 14:30
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Willenhall)	Sun: 18:00 - 20:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Wednesfield)	Sun: 18:00 - 20:00
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara (W'ton)	Wed: 11:00 - 15:00

Martial Arts Gatka

Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara (Coventry)	Tues: 18:30 - 20:30
Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Sat: 12:00 - 14:00
Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Mon: 17:30 - 19:30
Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara (Leicester)	Sat: 19:00 - 21:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Telford)	Sat: 12:00 - 14:00
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara (W'ton)	Fri: 18:00 - 20:00

Shin Kin

Bebe Nanaki Gurdwara (B'ham)	Fri: 17:15 - 18:15
Ramgharia Gurdwara (Coventry)	Wed: 18:00 - 19:00 / 19:00 - 20:00 (Ladies only)
Dasmesh Gurdwara (Leicester)	Sat: 18:00 - 20:00
Singh Sabha Gurdwara (Nottingham)	Wed: 17:30 - 18:30
Nanaksar Thath Gurdwara (W'ton)	Thurs: 18:00 - 19:00 / Sat 11:30 - 12:30
Sikh School Of Arts (Kings Heath)	Fri 18:00 - 19:00
Singh Sabha Gurdwara (Coventry)	Thurs: 18:00 - 19:00
Guru Panth Parkash Gurdwara (Leicester)	Sat: 11:00 - 12:00
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Telford)	Mon: 18:00 - 19:00 (Ladies Only) / Wed: 19:00 - 20:00

Eagle Claw Kung Fu

Guru Nanak Community Centre (West Brom)	Wed: 18:00 - 20:00
Guru Nanak Community Centre (West Brom)	Sun: 17:00 - 19:00 / 19:00 - 20:00 (Ladies Only)

Thai Boxing

Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Tues: 19:00 - 21:00
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Ju Jitsu

Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
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Youth Club

Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara (Coventry)	Thurs: 18:30 - 20:00
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Yoga Class

Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	Mon: 19:00 - 20:15
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Gym

Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Tues, Wed, Thurs & Sun 19:00 - 21:00
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Annual Gurmat Camp

Nanaksar Gurdwara (Walsall)	July - August 8 - 15 yrs
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Amrit Sanchar

Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Smethwick)	Sat 25th October: 21:00 - 00:00
Gurdwara Amrit Parchar (Oldbury)	Every Sat after Sangraand

Sir Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, 47 – 49 Cross Road, Coventry, CV6 5GR
Ramgharia Gurdwara, Foleshill Road, Coventry
Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara, Harnall Lane, Coventry

Bebe Nanaki Gurdwara, 89 Rockery Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, 0121 551 3489
Guru Nanak Gurdwara, 128 - 130 High Street, Smethwick, B66 3AP, 0121 555 5926

Ramgharia Gurdwara, Waverley Road, Small Heath, Birmingham

Sikh School of Arts, 341 Vicarage Road, next to Auto Power, Kings Heath, Birmingham

Gurdwara Amrit Parchar, 65 Birmingham Road, Oldbury, B69 4EH, 0121 552 3778

Guru Nanak Community Centre, Edward Street, West Bromwich, Birmingham

Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, East Park Road, Leicester, 01533 760517

Guru Panth Parkash Gurdwara, Ashford Lane off Welford Lane, Leicester, LE2 6AA

Dasmesh Gurdwara, Gypsy Lane, Leicester

Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Nottingham Road, Sherwood, Nottingham

Guru Nanak Gurdwara, 1 Hadley Road, Telford, TF1 6PW, 01952 251734

Nanaksar Gurdwara, Wellington Street, Pleck, Walsall, WS2 9QR, 01922 641040

Nanaksar Thath Gurdwara, Penn Road, Wolverhampton

Guru Nanak Gurdwara, 65 – 67 Walsall Road, Willenhall, WV13 2RD. 01902 605286

Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Well Lane, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 1XT

Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, Sedgley Street/ Duncan Street, Wolverhampton, WV2 3AJ, 01902 459413

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What's Going On?

